764 Kirgiz, who, for example, have occasionally been found to worship fire, is said to be a vestige of Shamanism.

563 The Kirgiz are split up into many small mountain dwelling groups and often are not able to keep in touch with others of their race. In recent years, however, some have become educated to a more modern, more urbanized life.

Kazakhs

492 Chinese, it may be said, do not usually make distinctions between the Kirgiz and another people of Sinkiang, the Kazakhs. The latter are also Moslems and are widely distributed between the T'ien Shan and the Altai. They speak Turki, are notorious as raiders, and are famous for their wild horsemanship. Tu Chung-yüan says that Kazakh children of five or six are already well trained to ride horseback. "There are none," he says, "at the age of ten who do not have unusual talent such as enables them to tell the sickness of a horse, to control the animal, to stand on its back, to bend from the horse to pick up things, to straighten up quickly, and above all to ride as though glued on the animal. Such feats as these are performed by Kazakh soldiers in Soviet motion pictures."

579 Tu reminds his readers that Sino-Russian boundary demarcations have put one branch of the Kazakhs under Russian and the other under Chinese political authority. This has made it difficult to draw a rigid racial line on the frontier, and Kazakhs riding across the steppes to raid an innocent herder at times have created border incidents. As Tu states, "The Kazakh people are very strong but also very lazy, and outside of tending cattle, often do not have any occupation. So some, when winter comes, take to the life of a lancer. A few steal cattle and horses, and many kill men and take their goods. For this is only an outgrowth of their military talent, and they lack any other way in which to use it. Wouldn't one think that, if these excellent warriors were persuaded to attack the enemy in this time of Resistance, each would do the work of a hundred?"

101 As in many another Chinese racial problem, however, there is a mixup concerning information about the Kazakhs. Russians, who have a separate group named similarly (the famous Kazakhs, or Cossacks

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by a troop of cavalry at a smart amble; it was the Commandant of the Garrison, also coming to see me off. The carriers tried to turn the ponies back, but D.'s patience had long been exhausted and she would have none of it; urged by her cries the ponies and our mounted servants charged down the lane and after a short tussle bore back the Commandant's carriage, escort and all, out into the dusty high-road. Fortunately the gallant officer was too much under the influence of opium to be quite aware of what was happening; fortunately also, no other dignitaries came to see me off and I escaped an hour later after the most cordial adieux.

D. had quite recovered her equanimity when I caught her up after a sharp ten miles' canter. She had been lucky enough to witness a most picturesque spectacle on the road. A caravan of some two hundred camels carrying raw wool from Kucha to Kashgar happened to leave Aqsu the same morning as ourselves and to be crossing the Qum Ariq River just as D. overtook it. The huge, shaggy animals with their bulky loads were tied in strings of eight, each string as usual led by a man on a donkey [1] and the whole caravan chiming with a regular carillon of bells. At the ford the Qum Ariq runs in four broad channels of varying depth; it was as good as a play, D. said, to watch the strings of camels, each guided by a yelling carrier perched on the top of the leading animal's load, zigzagging painfully across one channel after another. The donkeys, cool and sensible as ever (nobody who has travelled in the Lands of the Sun makes the mistake of thinking the donkey a stupid animal) swam across by themselves without fuss, while the big fierce-looking Kalmuck watch-dogs barked furiously as they splashed around. To complete the picture, three big Chinese travelling carts coming from Maralbashi with a minor official and his household on board met the camels in mid-stream and made confusion worse confounded. I had a talk with the carriers later in the day. They told me that the wool belonged to Kucha sheep-farmers; the camels came from the Bai district, and had been hired at the rate of 8 taels (21*s.* 4*d.*) each; fifty days had been allowed them under the terms of their contract for the whole journey,

[1] Mongolian and "Bactrian" camels travel more steadily if they are led by a pony or donkey; the latter animal is more commonly used for the purpose as its pace is practically the same as a camel's. I did not notice this custom in South Persia, where the single-humped Arabian camel is used.

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and they expected to reach Kashgar within a month from Aqsu.

For 112 miles after leaving Aqsu we traversed the perfectly flat plain to the north of the Tarim River jungles, within sight of, though not actually along, the famous " Silk Road " first organized by the Han Emperor Wu-ti in the second century B.C., for the transport of Chinese fabrics to the Far West.[1] At an average interval of 15 miles there are halting places with poky little native serais and sometimes a slightly better Chinese rest-house. Each place has a small bazaar of shanties and stalls in which the people of the settlement, or of the nearest oasis, sell food for man and beast. At Chilan, 57 miles from Aqsu, we found ourselves in Kelpin district again; we noticed here a remarkable improvement in the facial type of the people, the women being remarkably handsome with regular, almost Greek, features.

The two Chinese troopers deputed by the O.C. Aqsu to escort our caravan as far as Maralbashi caused us much innocent amusement. One of them was comparatively bright and helpful; indeed, except for the fact that he could not fire his carbine, the bolt of which was tied on with a red handkerchief, and that he never mounted his horse without the assistance of a wall at least three feet high, he was quite a useful cavalryman. He had obviously never heard a shot fired in anger; whenever I shot a bird in his presence, or even fired my gun, he became wildly excited, laughing and clapping his hands like a child. But he was at any rate alive; his brother in arms, on the other hand, was the most miserable, opium-sodden wretch I ever saw, even in the Titai's army. We stood him as long as we could, for the sake of the O.C. Aqsu's " face," but the limit was reached the night we came to Yaka Kuduk. The march from Chilan was a moderately long one, and D. and I cantered ahead in the afternoon so as to arrive before dark, expecting the caravan to come in about seven o'clock. To our discomfort, it did not arrive till half-past eight. We questioned Hafiz. " Sahib," he replied, with an apologetic grin, " it was the opium-smoking *chirik*. Last night he finished all the opium he brought with him, and this afternoon he asked us for some. We had none, and he became very angry. Just after sunset he fell off his horse, and we

[1] The Chinese military road ran along the foot of the Kelpin Tagh a few miles to the north-west of the present route (Stein, " Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. II, p. 427).

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER XV

UNDER THE NORTHERN RIM OF TIBET

IN the spring of 1924 official business along the south-eastern road once more demanded my personal attention. Leaving Kashgar on 1st March and spending a busy fortnight at Yarkand, we reached Keriya on 12th April after short halts at Posgam, Karghalik, Goma and Khotan. On the way home we broke new ground between Keriya and Khotan and again between Khotan and Karghalik; but on the outward journey we used the same direct caravan route which we had already twice traversed, and I will therefore confine myself as far as Keriya to a few passages from diaries and letters.

Yarkand, 7th March, 1924.

On the wide grassy plain south of Yangi Hissar this morning we overtook a caravan of camels carrying Tashkend sugar and Baku oil from Kashgar to Khotan. They were fine shaggy brutes and as impressive as camels always are when you see them in long strings filing across the wide spaces of the earth. But what marked this caravan among all I have ever seen—or heard—was its music. Never was there such a carillon of bells as that which rose to heaven from this slow-moving train of unmusical-looking antediluvians. There were loud bells and soft bells, big clanging bells and little bubbling bells, high-pitched bells and low booming bells and cracked bells, double bells one inside the other, copper bells from Kashgar and iron bells from Toqsun far along the road to Mongolia. Some of these latter have as clappers—what do you think? Camels' bones. I bought one the other day as a curiosity. There is something grimly pathetic about the idea of camels padding week after week, month after month, across Asia with the bones of their predecessors tinkling in the bells at their necks.

We had a really brilliant day for our "triumphal entry" into Yarkand with about a hundred British subjects of all kinds and religions mounted on more or less unmanageable ponies behind us. Yarkand as a whole took the utmost interest in our arrival, for it had been rumoured that we had gone back to India and that a former incumbent of the post had returned. I was amused to hear a woman in the bazaar say to a friend as I rode past *Bulturki Consul shu* (This is last year's Consul).

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dare to detain us, and the head of the firm had given notice of the day we should cross the frontier; but we never knew a moment's peace till we were out of the hands of that gang. How different from General Feng's soldiers! We passed right through their fighting lines, and they never seized even our little donkey! The officer said, "These men are honest apprentices; they have a long journey ahead; no one is to touch them, their goods or their donkey!" That's something like an army!'

The following morning we reached 'Third Halt,' which we found to be a torrid place, lying in a cup of the hills. Our inn rooms were intolerably hot, and after a brief rest we got up and sat under the trees, hoping to escape from the flies, and also seize the advantage of any passing breeze. While resting there we heard the sound of the familiar camel-bell, and looking up watched a string of sixty of these beasts cross the village stream. The banks were muddy, and the awkwardness of the camel when walking on slippery ground was evident. These beasts frequently come to grief when attempting to travel on other than sandy roads, and broken legs are not infrequent at a river's edge. The driver was a Barkul man, which city is colonised by Chinese, many of whom make their living by grazing camels. The Turki is of no use as a camel driver. He is too impetuous, and seems unable to give these animals the peculiar care which they need. Strong, long-lived, and enduring, as they are under good conditions, they easily lose heart, and once overdriven never recover. Rough treatment, hustle or untoward difficulties play havoc with these creatures, whose temperamental qualities seem to be as strange as their physical peculiarities. Once their spirit is broken they are of no further use, and lie down and die.

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[133] feature. The first night after Kucheng we slept at
486 Tsimusa—' The City of Everlasting Trust '—and seeing a military guard at the gate we knew that an officer would shortly call for our passports. On this occasion, however, the innkeeper failed to inform the authorities of the arrival of foreigners, and when the soldiers came to demand our papers they were exceedingly angry, and threatened him with a beating if he neglected this part of his duty again. The upshot of the fuss was that the innkeeper spent the whole night in raging and cursing officials, foreigners, passports, and soldiers alike, vowing that no ' foreign devil ' should again darken his doors ! To judge by the experience of this and other journeys in Kansu and Turkestan, it is of the greatest importance that travellers' passports should be in strict order, and up-to-date. We were required to produce these documents at the most unlikely places, and sometimes they were examined both on entering and on leaving a city, as well as at the Yamen. We were thankful to quit the ' Inn of the Cursing Landlord ' at 5 a.m. and proceed on our journey towards Santai—' The Third Stage.'
133 The road took us for seventy *li* over grassy steppes,
241 and for the last fifteen *li* we drove by rapid streams between fields of maize and sorgum, bordered by hedges and shaded by overhanging trees. The whole scene, apart from the nature of the crops, might have been an English rural landscape, and it warmed our hearts as we thought of the pleasures of soon wandering in English lanes and fields.

484 We were feeling the fatigue of our long journey much more severely now that we were enduring the added strain of great heat, and though the night stages were at an end, such a diary entry as : ' Rose at 2-30 a.m. and took a very heavy, hot stage,' speaks for itself.
• 492 The carters also were suffering from the prolonged

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fatigue, and were wont to vent their irritation on the mules. We had an interesting lesson in animal psychology when one of the drivers went a little too far in beating a mule, whose feelings he injured more than its body. It quietly went on strike, and though it walked with the team, yet kept the traces so slack as to bring no ' pull ' upon the cart. The Chinese understood the situation at once. ' It's temper is up ! ' they said, ' and we must take it out of the traces and walk it for a bit.' This they did, but the animal did not recover itself until it had been ridden for a few hours, received an extra feed, and been petted. After this acknowledgment of unjust treatment, it recovered its ' face,' and went to work again ! Little Molly always held herself aloof from the common herd, only associating with her own shaft-mule. Her spirit was splendid, and she pulled with an energy that was foreign to the baser sort. Both men and beasts were needing the long rest which lay before them at Urumchi.

We had been without the guiding telegraph wire ever since we parted from it at Tsikioking, but at Kucheng we met with it once more, and we were glad of its indication over the rolling steppes which we now so frequently crossed. A new feature of the road was the little Ili Valley cart, of a build unfamiliar to us. The fact that it had four wheels gave it a Western look, for all Chinese carts, large or small, are built on two wheels, and this new structure was unknown to most of our party, who were as delighted as children to see this departure from the agelong, traditional vehicle.

Leaving Santai, an hour's drive brought us to the site of the original town of that name, now a mass of crumbling ruins, one more reminder of the havoc and desolation wrought by the Moslem rebellion in 1862–1877. Ruined villages, hamlets and farmsteads, mark

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563 361 refused by the Chinese authorities, as also a suggestion that the building of the Russian Orthodox Church should be turned into a theatre. In the shops of this quarter there may be bought Russian bread, cakes and biscuits; also Russian boots, foreign cloth and galvanised pails and buckets of all kinds.

366 In another part of the town are streets of good Chinese shops, and here every variety of tinned food can be purchased, at prices which amply compensate the merchant for his trouble in the transit. The 563 Urumchi crowd presents special features which to us 492 were of absorbing interest. We were in a country where horsemanship is highly valued. The Mongol, Tibetan, Qazaq and Tungan are all splendid riders, though each has his own unmistakable style of handling a horse, and his own way of controlling it. The Russians and Siberians use Russian horses—fine-skinned, tall, and elegant—in contrast with the rough, shaggy Mongol pony, or the half tamed steed of the Tungan, who loves to gallop down the narrow streets, 563 scattering the populace as he goes. It was now that 291 we became familiar with the Qazaq—a broad-shouldered 492 man, whose burly build is exaggerated by the wadded or fur garments he wears both summer and winter alike. His home-made, high-heeled, tall leather boots were different in cut from those of the Mongolian, and his head-gear is a high-pointed cap, with a circular flap over each ear and on the shoulders. He was often seen riding a bullock, whose enormous flanks were surmounted by a small, wooden saddle, held in place by a 563 wide girth. When shopping he seldom dismounted, 437 but conducted his bargaining from his seat, and though he might know nothing of the Chinese language, the price was fixed by means of movements of the fingers, the buyer and seller each introducing his hand up the other's sleeve.